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ABSTRACT

A 15-item questionnaire, completed by 93 superintendents of Connecticut schools, focused on the identification, program design, instructional strategies, and support provided for early readers, their teachers, and their parents. Responses to each item are summarized statistically, and the general patterns that emerge in each of these areas are discussed. Among the findings reported is the central role of the classroom teacher in both identifying the early reader and structuring the child's reading program. (AA)

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THE GIFTED READER:

INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES IN CONNECTICUT

by Sue A. Deffenbaugh

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CONNECTICUT ASSOCIATION
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Foreword

The Connecticut Association for Reading Research has supported this project of surveying the educational strategies for children who begin school already reading fluently. This project is part of CARR's constant concern about the reading instruction of all students in the state of Connecticut.

Sue Deffenbaugh, Ph.D.
Research Chairperson, 1975-76
Connecticut Association for
Reading Research

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
Chapter 1: Rationale; The Gifted Child and Reading	1
Purpose of Study	2
Definition of Terms	3
Chapter 2: Research Procedure	4
Questionnaire Design	4
Sample of Study	5
Compilation of Survey Information	5
Chapter 3: Findings of the Study	7
Identification of Early Readers	7
Instructional Patterns	14
Instructional Strategies and Materials	20
Support for Children, Teachers and Parents	25
Chapter 4: Summary and Considerations	27
Selected Bibliography	
Appendix A: CARR Questionnaire	

CHAPTER 1

RATIONALE: THE GIFTED CHILD AND READING

Schools today are firmly committed to the ideal of providing appropriate education for all children. Special instructional strategies and learning resources are planned for learning disabled children; support programs are funded to aid "educationally disadvantaged" children; special settings are provided for mentally retarded and emotionally disturbed children. One unique group of children, however, receives few special educational experiences and are seldom the focus of educational funding. This often neglected child is the gifted or the academically talented child. In a 1972 study presented to the U.S. Commissioner of Education, an advisory panel after extensive study reported that between two and three million gifted children in school systems across the nation are not identified and their educational needs are not being appropriately met (Education of the Gifted and Talented, 1972). The gifted child is frequently expected to follow the normal curriculum at the normal pace.

Particularly in the field of reading has the gifted child been neglected. A survey of research shows hundreds of studies exploring the causes of reading retardation and investigating special techniques to be used with remedial readers. Studies of gifted readers, on the other hand, are sparse, even though in general research on gifted children early reading and high interest in words have been identified as characteristic of gifted children. Witty (1958) found that 50 percent of the gifted children he studied learned to read before they started school with 40 percent of these early readers reading before the age of five and some even at the age of three. Even with this information available,

reading educators have developed very few reading programs for gifted children. The literature about reading and gifted children suggests general guidelines for identifying, planning programs, and evaluating the progress of gifted students. However, few descriptions of actual operating programs appear in the literature, and in survey studies systems report only occasional unique arrangements for these students. It is very difficult, therefore, to determine what reading programs are actually being provided, how instruction is being designed to meet the needs of the gifted student, and how special programming effects the reading interests and abilities of these children.

Purpose of the Study

This questionnaire study was designed to investigate how Connecticut school systems are meeting the needs of gifted readers in the early primary grades. Each year some children begin kindergarten and first grade already knowing how to read. These children can read fluently and can comprehend materials at the third and fourth grade level. Although they may not be able to verbalize all the word attack generalizations, they have definitely mastered the decoding process and, therefore, do not usually fit into the typical primary reading classes. They present a problem and a challenge for our schools.

This study was conducted to answer four basic questions about the status of programs for these children:

1. How are "early readers" identified in Connecticut schools?
2. What instructional patterns are used in the school systems in Connecticut to meet the needs of early readers in the primary grades?
3. What instructional procedures and materials are used with early readers?

4. What support do school systems provide for programs, for teachers, and for parents of early readers?

Definition of Terms

In this study the following terms are significant and, therefore, specifically defined:

Early reader - child who at the beginning of kindergarten or first grade is reading fluently at the third or fourth grade level with good comprehension.

Instructional pattern - specific organizational design, such as separate classes of individualization.

Instructional procedure - teaching techniques and materials used by classroom or special teachers.

CHAPTER 2

RESEARCH PROCEDURE

This investigation used a survey approach with a questionnaire as the data collection instrument.

Questionnaire Design

In order to gather information about educational practices in Connecticut in programming for the early reader, a questionnaire (see Appendix A) consisting of 15 questions was designed. The questions focused on seven general areas of concern:

1. program organization for early readers
2. identification of early readers
3. instructional strategies used with early readers
4. materials used with early readers
5. administrative responsibility and funding for programs for early readers
6. assistance for teachers
7. assistance for parents

A preliminary questionnaire was prepared and completed by five representative school systems. On the basis of the results and comments to this preliminary draft, a final questionnaire with several multiple response questions and with some open-ended questions was designed. The multiple response pattern presents problems in tabulating and in analyzing results but this response pattern was selected in order to maximize the return of the questionnaire. It was designed to allow the respondent flexibility in reporting information and to avoid possible suggestion

or implication of good or bad practice. For example, then, the question dealing with a description of program organization provides four possible choices with the option of marking one or all of the choices.

Sample of the Study

The questionnaire was mailed in early March, 1976, to all superintendents of public school systems in the state of Connecticut. This included all city, suburban, rural, and regional districts. 176 questionnaires were mailed.

Data Collection Procedure

Each superintendent received 1) a cover letter describing the project and the tabulation procedure and suggesting that the reading director or a reading person complete the questionnaire, 2) the three-page, 15-item questionnaire and 3) a stamped, addressed, return envelope. The name of the system on the returned questionnaire was optional; the only identifying information required was the size of the school system.

Compilation of Survey Information

Each item of the questionnaire was tabulated in two ways: 1) a count of the total responses to each alternative statement of conditions, procedures, etc., and 2) a count of the combinations of responses in cases where multiple responses to items were appropriate. For example, a school system may have responded to item 6 in the following manner:

6. How would you describe your "program" for these children?

- ✓ Enrichment in regular class
- ___ Promotion to another class
- ✓ "High" reading group in regular classroom
- ___ Special enrichment program designed by someone other than the classroom teacher
- ___ Other

In tabulation the response was first entered as one response for the category "enrichment in regular class" and as one response for the category "'high' reading group in regular classroom." Then the total response was recorded as a two-part response of enrichment and high group. Thus final results show not only types of programs used but also various combinations of possible programs.

This tabulation procedure was selected in order to reflect the multiple and varied approaches many systems are using in meeting the needs of their students.

CHAPTER 3

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Of the 176 questionnaires distributed, 93 (or 53%) questionnaires with the required identification information were returned. The questionnaires were grouped by size of school system:

31 districts with enrollments under 2,500 students

32 districts with enrollments of 2,500 to 5,000 students

18 districts with enrollments of 5,000 to 10,000 students

12 districts with enrollments of 10,000 to 30,000 students

In the analysis of the information from the questionnaires, the four questions posed in Chapter 1 provided the guideline for the organizing and reporting of the data. The results, therefore, are presented in four sections: 1) the identification of early readers, 2) instructional patterns, 3) instructional procedures and materials and 4) support for children, teachers, and parents.

Identification of Early Readers

Nelson and Cleland (1971) state that although reading programs for early readers vary in methods, materials and content used, certain components are necessary in any program. The first essential component is a system for early identification of intellectual, perceptual and reading abilities. Identification procedures can be as simple and flexible as an informal reading inventory given by the kindergarten teacher or as formal as a total review of a child's academic status completed by the reading specialist and school psychologist.

The questionnaire focused on this identification process through items 1, 2, 3, and 4:

1. Does your school system provide for children in kindergarten, first and second grades who read two or three grade levels above their grade/age placement?

2. How are primary-aged children who are reading well above their grade level placement identified?

3. Briefly describe the procedure, formal or informal, used in identifying these children.

4. Are any formal tests regularly used for identification of these students? If so, which tests?

The responses to these items generally indicated that the classroom teacher and the reading specialist are the principal people involved in the identification process and that observation and formal and informal reading tests are common identification tools.

Table I summarizes the responses to the question of how children are identified. Data are categorized by the size of the districts and by the total state; the figures represent percent of districts' use of specified identification procedures.

As can be seen in Table I (page 9) the classroom teacher is in all sizes of districts the person most consistently involved in the identification process. Teachers and parents are, of course, the persons most aware of the child's abilities and most likely to refer for further testing or special instruction. The reading specialist in all sizes of districts also plays a role in the identification process, usually at the referral level.

The percentages in Table I, in addition to showing the widespread importance of the classroom teacher and the reading specialist, also indicate that there typically exist many persons or many testing procedures within a school system that may be used to identify an early reader. Only five districts of the 93 responding indicated the use of one method; the majority of systems reported three or four possible identification patterns.

Table I. Identification of Early Readers

Response	Districts under 2,500 (N=31)	Districts of 2,500-5,000 (N=32)	Districts of 5,000-10,000 (N=18)	Districts of 10,000-30,000 (N=12)	Total (N=93)
Identified through kindergarten teacher	84%	75%	94%	75%	82%
Identified through reading specialist testing	65%	75%	89%	83%	75%
Identified through preschool screening procedure	34%	56%	39%	25%	42%
Identified through parental referral	48%	44%	72%	42%	51%
Identified through classroom teacher	90%	91%	100%	75%	90%
Identified through regular school achievement testing program	45%	31%	61%	42%	43%
Identified through psychological examination	29%	16%	17%	50%	25%
Identified through other methods	06%	03%	06%	17%	06%

The most common pattern involved the teacher identification of the child's reading ability through observation or through parent reports with subsequent referral to the reading specialist for further evaluation. The following responses to item 3 of the questionnaire are typical explanations of the procedures used in Connecticut: One system wrote:

> The child who deviates from the norm is usually identified first by the classroom teacher.
>
> In the area of reading, the Reading Specialist would be asked to administer diagnostic tests and assist in planning for adequate instruction.

Another school system outlined its procedure:

> Children are referred by classroom teachers for testing by the Reading Specialist, and for further testing by the school psychologist if more information is needed to determine the appropriate programming. Individual programs are then prescribed in a School Planning and Placement Team meeting in which the Principal, Reading Specialist and all involved teachers participate.
>
> Parent may initiate the referral also. Parent is always involved in the decision making regarding programming.

Another system responded:

> Early in the year first grade teachers have been very alert in spotting these children. The Reading Consultant will test. Conferences will be held with kindergarten teacher, parents, first grade teacher, and Reading Consultant. Psychological testing will follow if the parents agree. Programming is planned.

Still another system stated:

> There is no formal procedure used in identifying gifted children in grades 1 and 2. We rely principally on classroom teacher observation and reading consultant testing for identification.

Another commonly reported patten involved preschool or kindergarten screening programs and/or other formal testing programs. Typically the results are used as

the first step in the identification process with classroom teachers, parents and reading specialists contributing and expanding the information. One system described its process of preschool testing and other procedures as follows:

> All children entering kindergarten have preschool testing. If reading ability is not identified then, it often is by classroom teachers or sometimes parents call attention to it. Teachers refer children to the Reading Consultant, who tests and recommends specific materials for reading placement. Children take criterion referenced tests (K through 3) and are placed in indicated skill groups for instruction. Often criterion referenced testing indicates the need for higher placement or faster pacing. School personnel and parents may initiate referral to the talented and gifted program, although many accelerated readers are not in this program.

Another system wrote:

> All children are tested before they start the kindergarten year. Many parents make teachers aware that their children are reading. These children and others throughout the year are referred to the Reading Consultant for readiness testing or an Informal Reading Inventory.

Yet another system indicated:

> Children are identified in I.G.E. testing and during the Readiness program (A.B.C. First Step) which does involve early stages of reading.

Interestingly, the degree to which a system had formalized its identification procedure did not appear to be related to district size. There were systems with student enrollments of 10,000 to 30,000 with no formal procedures and there were systems with under 2,500 students with very systematic, formal procedures. The common feature that characterized most school systems' procedures was the variety of persons involved in the identification process.

The formal and informal tests which were listed by school systems as instruments used in the identification process covered nearly all categories

of tests on the market today. Item 4 of the questionnaire read, "Are any formal tests regularly used for identification of these children? If so, which tests?" The responses were categorized as 1) reading diagnostic tests, 2) standardized survey tests, 3) readiness tests, 4) placement tests, 5) intelligence tests, and 6) other tests. A total of 55 different tests were listed. There were no tests, however, that were administered by a significant number of districts. Twelve districts (13%) listed the Metropolitan Achievement Test and 13 districts (14%) listed the Gates-MacGinite Reading Test; these two tests were the most widely used of any tests mentioned. Since 13% and 14% of districts certainly does not indicate widespread usage of a test, it appears that no one test is favored in the state of Connecticut. As with the identification procedures, there did not appear to be any difference in the tests administered that might be attributed to district size. Tabulation of tests by district sizes produced similar lists of instruments. Tests listed by the respondents were:

I. Diagnostic Reading Tests

Durrell Analysis of Reading Difficulty
Spache Reading Scales
Woodcock Reading Mastery Test
Botel Word Recognition and Opposites
Informal Reading Inventory
Silvaroli Classroom Inventory
Gray Oral Reading Test
Gilmore Oral Reading Test
Slosson Oral Teading Test
Dolch Sight Word Tests
CIRP Decoding Tests
IGE Word Attack
Fountain Valley System
Cooper-McGuire Word Attack
Doren Word Attack Test

II. Standardized Survey Tests

California Achievement Tests
CTBS
Gates-MacGinite Reading Test
Iowa Test of Basic Skills
Metropolitan Achievement Tests
SRA Achievement Test
Stanford Achievement Test
Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test

III. Readiness Tests

ABC Inventory
Clymer-Barrett Readiness Test
Dallas Pre-School Screening
Harrison-Stroud Readiness Test
Inventory of Readiness Skills
Lee-Clark Readiness Test
Mannsuiter Development Test
Metropolitan Readiness Test
Monroe Readiness Test
Murphy-Durrell Readiness Test
Pre-Reading Screening

IV. Placement Tests

Ginn
Holt
Houghton-Mifflin
MacMillan
McGraw-Hill
Scott-Foresman

V. Intelligence Tests

WISC
Stanford-Binet
Cognitive Abilities Test
Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test
Lorge Thorndike
Pitner-Cunningham

VI. Other

Rorschach Projective
Draw-a-Person
Boehm Test of Basic Concepts
Peabody Language Tests
ITPA
Zimmerman's Pre-School Language Test
Torrance Tests of Creativity
Slingerland

One interesting finding in response to the question about formal testing was the number of districts reporting no formal testing. Twenty-five percent of the districts reporting (23 of 93) stated that they used no formal testing. When tabulated according to district size, the response no formal testing varied from 17 percent to 31 percent of reporting districts with the following pattern:

Districts under 2,500 students	-	23%
Districts of 2,500-5,000 students	-	31%
Districts of 5,000-10,000 students	-	22%
Districts of 10,000-30,000 students	-	17%

The majority of reporting districts, 53 percent, listed two or more tests used in the identification process with a few districts listing as many as 10 tests. Thirty-two percent of the reporting districts used only one instrument, usually an achievement or readiness test. Again the size of the reporting district did not seem to be a factor in the number of tests listed.

Instructional Patterns

The second significant component in programming for early readers is the organizational or instructional plan. Should the children remain in their age level classroom? Should they be placed in fourth grade rooms for reading? Should they do the same work as other children and not be singled out? This is perhaps one of the most controversial issues in the education of the gifted or academically advanced child.

Some authorities suggest special ability grouping and are immediately criticized as being undemocratic and creating an elite group. Other authorities recommend acceleration or grade skipping and are then accused of neglecting the social-emotional growth of the child. Still others support enrichment within

regular programs and are then said to be leaving the education of the gifted child to the whim of the teacher.

Despite the controversy it is evident that some organizational scheme is necessary in order to provide adequately for the needs of the gifted child. Sanders (1961) in Elementary Education and the Academically Talented Pupil reviewed several viable organizational patterns: 1) intensive enrichment, 2) extensive enrichment, 3) special classes - total day, 4) special classes - part day and 5) acceleration. Each of these patterns can be translated to the organizational schemes used in reading instruction today. Individualized reading designs using trade books on a wide variety of topics with teacher-student conferences can be classified as an "extensive" enrichment design; the child is reading about many different subjects and is expanding his breadth of knowledge. An individualized reading program, on the other hand, that focuses on one topic, such as the history of money or prehistoric animals, creates a greater depth of understanding and uses an "intensive" enrichment model. Similarly, special classes for part of the day represent a typical, very common reading instruction organization, usually referred to as three reading groups or the basal approach. Moving children to advanced grade levels for reading instruction is also a common reading instructional pattern; this parallels the controversial acceleration plan frequently discussed in literature on the education of the gifted child.

How do Connecticut systems organize instruction for early readers? On the questionnaire 1, 5, and 6 were designed to tap organizational patterns. Table II (page 16) summarizes responses to item 1; respondents were encouraged to mark as many responses as needed to describe their approaches.

Table II. Provisions for Instruction

Response	Districts under 2,500 (N=31)	Districts of 2,500-5,000 (N=32)	Districts of 5,000-10,000 (N=18)	Districts of 10,000-30,000 (N=12)	Total (N=93)
Yes with special separate program	23%	19%	33%	25%	27%
Yes with special separate reading group within regular classroom	55%	69%	61%	50%	67%
Yes with placement in advanced grade level for reading instruction	35%	50%	50%	25%	45%
Yes by teacher adjustment of regular curriculum	61%	41%	56%	33%	54%
Yes by use of criterion testing and skill instruction	32%	28%	22%	42%	35%
Yes by individualized reading program	52%	53%	72%	67%	67%
No special arrangements	13%	03%	06%	17%	09%
No children who fit into this category	03%	03%	0%	0%	02%

Item 6 asked for similar information in a slightly different manner. This question read, "How would you describe your program for these children?" The response categories were more typical of the educational terminology likely to be used on a day-to-day program basis. Table III summarizes the responses to this item; again multiple responses were permitted.

Table III. Program Descriptions

Response	Districts under 2,500 (N=31)	Districts of 2,500-5,000 (N=32)	Districts of 5,000-10,000 (N=18)	Districts of 10,000-30,000 (N=12)	Total (N=93)
Enrichment in regular class	94%	84%	100%	75%	89%
Promotion to another class	19%	22%	28%	08%	20%
"High" reading group in regular class	52%	72%	67%	33%	59%
Special enrichment program designed by someone other than classroom teacher	39%	47%	[illegible]9%	33%	41%
Other	10%	16%	28%	08%	15%

The responses to Items 1 and 6 as tabulated in Tables II (page 16) and Table III (page 17) demonstrate the variety of approaches to organizational design used in Connecticut schools. Each arrangement described by Sanders (1961) is represented. Enrichment and special groups appear to be the most popular designs across all sizes of districts. Both these designs rely heavily on the skills of the classroom teacher in instructional planning. The use of criterion referenced tests and skill instruction does not appear to be as widely used as recent reports in the literature and as publishing representatives might suggest. Interesting data emerges as responses to items 1 and 6 are tabulated in terms of combinations of organizational designs. Several respondents penciled in beside the items, "it depends upon the child" or "for some children" or "both used." The combination responses reflect these patterns of designs and are probably more significant information than percent of districts responding to each individual design category. This combined data reveals information about 1) the typical classroom organization, 2) the use of one pattern exclusively, and 3) use of separate programs.

When data is tabulated by combination of responses, the general pattern of a classroom teacher individualizing and grouping to meet the needs of students emerges as the typical organizational pattern. The early reader, therefore, is probably in the highest reading group in the classroom (not necessarily at his own high reading level) with opportunities for other reading experiences through an individualized program or through teacher-planned enrichment. This organization is not substantially different from the organizational pattern in any primary classroom. In most instances, then, the teacher with the assistance of resource people and materials is essentially creating a program for the early reader within the design of the typical classroom instructiional pattern. This

is not to suggest that the pattern is weak or inappropriate. The pattern simply provides the framework; the framework, although it usually does, may or may not significantly influence what instruction occurs. The second piece of significant information which emerges through the analysis of combined responses is the use of one organizational pattern exclusively. Approximately 23 percent of the responding districts marked one pattern on questionnaire item 1. This single pattern was either a placement in an advanced reading group in the regular classroom or another class or a placement in an individualized reading program. No district in the state reported "a special separate program" as the only pattern of organization.

Elever percent of the respondents indicated they made "no special arrangements" for early readers. However, only two respondents marked this as the one appropriate description of their programs. The other respondents marked several categories, such as "enrichment" or "top group."

Districts provide instructional programming for early readers and have alternative organizational plans for the children. Do districts then use any specific term or label for these children? Response to item 6 about labels was an overwhelming "no" response, usually written in large capital letters. Table IV summarizes this data.

Table IV. Special Formal "Labels"

Response	Districts under 2,500 (N=31)	Districts of 2,500-5,000 (N=32)	Districts of 5,000-10,000 (N=18)	Districts of 10,000-30,000 (N=12)	Total (N=93)
Name (or Label) Used	10%	09%	22%	08%	12%
No Name (or Label) Used	84%	88%	78%	92%	85%
No Response to Item	06%	03%	0%	0%	03%

When titles were used, these were typically the titles of special separate programs, such as Advanced Learning Class, Program for Academically Tested, Gifted Child Classes or Accelerated Group.

Instructional Strategies and Materials

No organizational pattern, whether it be an enrichment design or an acceleration program, guarantees adequate instruction and motivation for the early reader. What is more significant is what educators do for the child within a particular organizational framework. What are appropriate goals, instructional strategies and materials for early readers? Should a regular reading series be used? Should early readers do the skill practice workbooks required of other students? Is the statement true: "A little review never hurts"?

Paul Witty, a leader in the field of reading for the gifted child, states, "One of the greatest needs of the verbally gifted child involves the provision of individually appropriate reading experiences from the beginning of his school entrance. If he is able to read on entering first grade, he should be encouraged to do so from varied reading sources that are individually suitable and appealing" (Witty, 1971, p.9). He continues, "During the primary grades routine basal reading instruction should be replaced by a balanced program adapted to differences in abilities and interests. The interests of gifted pupils should be employed to motivate reading . . . Effective teachers provide additional motivation through associating reading with carefully selected films, filmstrips and TV programs" (Witty, 1971, p.13). In suggesting instructional strategies and materials to be used with early readers Martinson (1968) also

recommends visual media in addition to using the public library, designing special techniques of reporting books and poems and reading good literature to children. Martinson emphasizes the use of much independent reading because she believes the basic skills have been mastered by the early gifted reader. She states, "the formal reading period should be used only sparingly as a means for checking on certain necessary skills and comprehension. Formal reading in a group on a day-to-day basis is a waste of time for the child who has already mastered the skills being taught" (Martinson, 1968, p.81.).

Much has been written about the ideal reading program for the early reader in the primary grades; however, little data is available about what actually occurs in schools. In order to determine what instructional strategies and materials are being used in Connecticut, items 7, 8, and 9 were included in the questionnaire. These items focus on who is involved in the instruction of these children, what approach is used in skills instruction and what instructional materials are used. Table V summarizes the data concerning persons involved in the instruction.

Table V. Personnel Involved in Working with Reading Programs for Early Readers

Response	Districts under 2,500 (N=31)	Districts of 2,500-5,000 (N=32)	Districts of 5,000-10,000 (N=18)	Districts of 10,000-30,000 (N=12)	Total (N=93)
Teacher	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Reading Specialist	61%	75%	72%	66%	69%
Librarian	58%	47%	56%	33%	51%
Special Teacher of the "gifted"	06%	06%	0%	17%	06%
Psychological Examiner	26%	13%	28%	25%	19%
Principal	26%	19%	33%	25%	25%
Other (paraprof-essionals, volunteers	16%	19%	22%	17%	18%

Table VI presents the response tabulations for the question, "How are these children instructed in the skills area?" This is a particularly significant question; there is almost universal agreement among the experts that these children should do only those skills that they do not know. The responses to the Connecticut questionnaire suggest that this is not necessarily a widespread instructional strategy.

Table VI. Instruction in the Skills Areas

Response	Districts under 2,500 (N=31)	Districts of 2,500-5,000 (N=32)	Districts of 5,000-10,000 (N=18)	Districts of 10,000-30,000 (N=12)	Total (N=93)
They do regular activities associated with school reading program	71%	72%	44%	50%	63%
They do all skills of phonics, etc., in accelerated manner	52%	69%	61%	25%	56%
They do only those skills they do not know	29%	38%	56%	58%	41%
They do no skill work	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Other	23%	06%	22%	08%	15%

As with other items, some respondents noted on the margin of the questionnaire that different instructional strategies are used with different children. It appears from the response to the skills instruction item and the responses to the organizational pattern items that many students are placed in the "top" group in the classroom or possibly a group in an advanced classroom and then follow the traditional skills sequence and activities outlined by the particular basal program. As can be seen in Table VI (page 22), the majority of students except in the largest districts, do all the skills within the regular program. Interestingly, the percentages of responses on "they do only those skills they do not know" is just slightly higher than responses on previous items about criterion-referenced testing. It seems that the use of criterion-referenced or performance-based tests probably promotes more specific, individualized instructional strategies.

Item 8 of the questionnaire asked first, "What instructional materials are used with these children?" This was an open-ended question with space provided for written responses. Responses to this question were multiple and varied. Almost all reading materials on the market today were on the final tabulation list.

Basal series, reading kits, trade books, workbooks, weekly newspapers, skill practice materials, games, media and literature books were the categories used in tabulating the responses. One interesting finding was the number of responses that listed basal series as instructional materials. There were a total of 94 individual responses which specifically named basal series; fourteen different series were listed. Twenty of the 93 responding districts (22%) did not list any basal; 16 districts (17%) used several series. The basal series appears to be a significant part (perhaps the base for most instruction) for the early readers.

The following partial listing of materials demonstrates the range and variety of instructional materials used in Connecticut states. Again, size of district did not appear to influence the responses to this item; smaller districts listed as many as and as varied materials as larger districts.

Basals	-	Economy, Follett, Ginn 360, Harcourt Brace, Holt-Rhinehart, Houghton-Mifflin, Lippincott, Lyons & Carahan, MacMillan, McGraw-Hill, Open Court, Phoenix Scott-Foresman, Sullivan
Kits/Programs	-	SRA kits, DLM materials, Random House, Xerox, Scholastic, Yearling kits, Readers Digest, SWIRL, PRS, EPC, Pacemaker, Audio Progress Lab.
Enrichment	-	Library books, trade books, Lippincott Super Books, Cricket Magazine, literary readers, reading resource center, filmstrips, teacher-made activities, recordings.
Support Materials	-	games, workbooks, Barnell-Loft, Croft Skillpacks, Webster Practice Readers, Economy Phonics, Curriculum Associated Press Worksheets, teacher-made activities.

The second part of question 8 asked "What other reading materials are used with these children?" Responses to this item were similar to responses to the first part about instructional materials except basal series were mentioned only 10 times.

Interestingly, materials usually referred to in articles about advanced readers and creative reading were not well represented in the responding districts' lists. Films, filmstrips, tapes, field trips, plays, and poetry were only mentioned occasionally. They may be used with the children but not considered an integral part of the child's reading program.

Support for Children, Teachers and Parents

In order for an instructional program to be continuous, self-sustaining and successful, there must be some support system for the program. This support can be in the form of funding, of materials, of administrative recognition, of accessible information and consultant services for teachers and of information for parents. Three items in the Connecticut survey were directed toward support services. These were: 11) Are there any funds available for these children? 13) Has the school system provided any special assistance for teachers in working with these children? and 14) Has the school system provided any special assistance for parents of these children?

Table VII summarizes the responses to the question about funding.

Table VII. Availability of Funding

Response	Districts under 2,500 (N=31)	Districts of 2,500-5,000 (N=32)	Districts of 5,000-10,000 (N=18)	Districts of 10,000-30,000 (N=12)	Total (N=93)
Funds Available	10%	03%	17%	17%	10%
Funds Included in Reading Budget	10%	13%	0%	08%	09%
Funds Available through Federal Grants	03%	0%	0%	08%	02%
No Funds Available	74%	75%	78%	67%	74%
No Response to Question	03%	09%	06%	0%	05%

As can be seen in Table VII (page 25), the responding school districts reported that funds are available in only a few districts. Although some programs can be supported by teacher effort and by use of regular materials, funding is definitely a desirable component of any educational program.

Besides funding, school districts can provide support for teachers through information sessions and through assistance from resource people. Previous responses to items dealing with the organizational design and identification of early readers reported that system reading and library personnel are involved with the programming for these early readers. Certainly, these resource people are one form of assistance for the classroom teacher. Other forms of assistance, such as in-service education, workshops, conferences, and professional libraries are reported to be available in only 25% of the responding districts. Even those reporting in-service often noted that the sessions were directed at individualizing and meeting the needs of all children, not specifically the advanced reader.

Assistance for parents, according to the reports from the responding districts, is informal and in most instances very minimal. Parent conferences about children's progress were the typical assistance modes with four districts (4%) reporting in-service for parents.

CHAPTER 4

SUMMARY AND CONSIDERATIONS

The child who enters school already reading high above his/her grade level placement is a concern of educators today. Some children are being taught informally in nursery school; others learn through listening to parents read to them and through following along in the book; others learn through television. How schools are meeting the needs of these children is an important question.

The 5-item questionnaire distributed to superintendents of Connecticut schools focused on the identification, program design, instructional strategies and support provided for the early readers, their teachers and parents. The results are interpreted with the typical problems of questionnaire research in mind. Terms, no matter how carefully selected or defined, may have been interpreted differently by different people. Also, some idea or practice may be so common to some respondents that it was overlooked in answering the questions. With these limitations in mind, general patterns, typical procedures and common materials were sought. No statistics were used to attempt to identify "most significant" or "significantly used" categories. The purpose of gathering the information, it was believed, was to explore the commonalities of various school districts' practices and to share the varied procedures and materials that are being utilized in the state.

If a child enters kindergarten able to read with good comprehension at the third or fourth grade level, the following sequence is likely to occur:

1) Teacher, often alerted by the parent, observes that the child is a good reader.

2) Teacher refers child to the reading specialist for further testing.

3) Reading specialist administers a battery of tests.

4) Teacher and reading specialist and frequently the librarian plan a program for the child by combining placement in the "top" basal reading group in the class or placement in another more advanced class for reading and enrichment activities.

5) The child does the activities associated with his/her basal reading group and does free reading through an individualized kit or through school library books. Many other materials may also be available for reinforcement.

6) Teacher is essentially in charge of the child's reading program.

7) Teacher receives little support in terms of funding or in-service information sessions. The reading specialist is available for assistance in planning instruction.

8) The parents of the child through school conferences learn about the child's progress, possible difficulties he/she may be experiencing and ideas for encouraging the child at home.

This, from the questionnaire data, appears to be the common pattern for identification, program design, instructional materials and support of the early reader. There are, of course, several variations on this pattern. Preschool screening is being used as an initial identification procedure. Enrichment activities may constitute the child's total program. The teacher may be able to purchase special materials for the advanced reader.

Considerations

It was evident from the comments of the respondents and from notes in the margins of the questionnaire that there is much concern for meeting the needs of individual children. "We do what is best for the individual child" was one comment. This, of course, is the goal of education; the pattern of responses to the questionnaire, however, suggest some significant concerns and considerations for Connecticut educators.

1. If the materials listed for instruction and the reporting of skills activities is accurate and widespread, is the early reader being challenged? Is his/her uniqueness being recognized? Is it possible to use regular classroom instructional procedures and materials without forcing the child into a preconceived mold of learning? Since the reading programs of primary grades focus upon skill building, is the early reader being forced to do unnecessary activities?
2. Although children are identified as early readers, is the instructional program designed to allow the child to reach his/her full potential? Is the "top" group in the first grade actually functioning at the early reader's instructional reading level? It may be the "top" group but still be considerably below the child's reading level.
3. Are there appropriate higher level materials in the classroom for the child? High reading level-lower interest level are difficult to find.
4. Are the children's interests being used as extensively as they could be? Most articles about curricula for these children stress the wide variety and depth of interests and the need to capitalize on these interests.

5. Since the teacher is the primary person planning and implementing instruction, does the teacher have adequate support in terms of in-service training and availability of professional publications, such as IRA's Reading for the Gifted and Creative Student and Creative Reading for Gifted Learners: A Design for Excellence and Martinson's Curriculum Enrichment for the Gifted in the Primary Grades. Certainly, pre-service education in most instances does not prepare the teacher to meet the needs of these children.
6. Since the teacher is the primary person involved in the early reader's program, is there enough planning time and assistance within the classroom to prepare instructional strategies and materials? It takes a great deal of time to prepare for these students.
7. Is the administrator knowledgeable about early readers and supportive of teachers through encouraging in-service, additional course work and other activities?
8. Although funding is certainly desirable, educators in the past ten years have found that it certainly does not insure good education. In planning for early readers there are many resources other than money that can be utilized for appropriate and interesting educational experiences.

These considerations and the information gathered about Connecticut programs reflect the concern and awareness of the special needs of early readers. Hopefully this concern will continue to be translated into constantly improving and expanding services for early readers in the primary grades.

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APPENDIX A

CARR Questionnaire - March, 1976

This questionnaire is designed to investigate the thinking of schools and reading people about the kinds of activities provided for "advanced" readers in the first and second grades. Each year there are a few children who enter the first grade already reading at the third or fourth grade levels. By sharing information, perhaps we can design some models for programming for these children.

Please take a half an hour and thoughtfully respond to the following items. Your time and thinking is greatly appreciated!

* * * * * * * * *

1. Does your school system (or school) provide for children in kindergarten, first and second grades who read two or three grade levels above their grade/age level placement? (Please check the appropriate response or responses; check as many as relevant.)

____ Yes, with special separate program
____ Yes, with special separate reading group within regular classroom
____ Yes, with placement in advanced grade level for reading instruction
____ Yes, by teacher adjustment of regular curriculum
____ Yes, by use of criterion testing and skill instruction
____ Yes, by individualized reading program
____ No special arrangements
____ No children who fit into this category

2. How are primary-aged children who are reading well above their grade level placement identified? (Check as many as applicable.)

____ Through kindergarten teacher identification
____ Through reading specialist testing
____ Through pre-school screening procedure
____ Through parental referral
____ Through classroom teacher identification
____ Through regular school achievement testing program
____ Through psychological examination
____ Other_____

3. Briefly describe the procedure, formal or informal, used in identifying these children. (Use other side of paper if needed.)

4. Are any formal tests regularly used for identification of these students? If so, which tests?

5. Is there any special formal "label" used for these children within the school system?

6. How would you describe your "program" for these children?

____ Enrichment in regular class
____ Promotion to another class
____ "High" reading group in regular classroom
____ Special enrichment program designed by someone other than the classroom teacher
____ Other_____

7. What personnel are involved in working with these children in terms of their reading programs?

____ Classroom teacher
____ Reading Specialist
____ Librarian
____ Special Teacher of "gifted"
____ Psychological examiner
____ Principal
____ Other_____

8. What <u>instructional</u> reading materials are used with these children?

What other reading materials are used with these children?

9. How are these children instructed in the skills areas?

____ They do regular activites associated with school reading program
____ They do all skills of phonics, etc., in accelerated manner
____ They do only those skills they do not know
____ They do no skill work
____ Other_____

10. Who is formally "in charge" of the planning of the reading program for these children? Who might assist?

11. Are there any funds available for these children?

12. What are your school system's plans for meeting the needs of those children?

____ No changes planned at this time
____ Committee investigating
____ Concern but no action at this time
____ Changes planned to be instigated in the near future
____ Other_____

13. Has the school system provided any special assistance for teachers in working with these children? For example, in service sessions, etc.?

14. Has the school system provided any special assistance for parents of these children?

15. Other comments and concerns you might have:

Basic Information (for coding purposes)

1) Size of school system_____

2) Your position in system_____

3) Name of school system_____ (optional)